

The Wise and Foolish Virgins described.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

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TWO SERMONS

DELIVERED AT

MONKWELL STREET MEETING,

On FEBRUARY 14 and 28, 1797,

By WILLIAM HUNTINGTON, S.S.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

AT PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, LITTLE TITCHFIELD-STREET,
AND AT MONKWELL-STREET MEETING.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

THE LIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUS REJOICETH, WHEN THE LAMP OF
THE WICKED SHALL BE PUT OUT. PROV. xiii. 9.

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The Wise Virgins described.

SERMON I.

MATTHEW XXV. 4.

BUT THE WISE TOOK OIL IN THEIR VESSELS WITH
THEIR LAMPS.

THE intention of this parable is, to shew to the faints the case and state of the church of God towards the close of time, when the Judge will be standing before the door; when the sun of righteousness will be going down over a sinful world; when the shadows of the evening, of the gospel dispensation, will be stretched out, and the midnight cry just ready to be ushered in.

Then, *then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.* By the kingdom of heaven here is not meant ultimate glory, nor the gospel; though both these are called the kingdom: nor is the empire of grace in the heart intended; but the visible crowd of professors, whether real or nominal. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are what is here

meant, consisting of two sorts: some real subjects, internally so by grace; and others only externally so in appearance and by profession. The number *ten* shews the small quantity of professors that will be found in the world at that time; for it will be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot. When the Son of man cometh the world will be very busy, professors very few, and vital godliness at a very low ebb.

The title given them is that of *virgins*, because of their outward and apparent adherence to Christ, his truth and worship, and to an open profession of his name.

Their *going forth* intends their turning their back upon the world, and joining themselves to, and associating with, the children of God.

What they had in view at their setting out was, *to meet the bridegroom*. This is what they all aimed at. They expected that he would appear as their lover, not as an angry judge, and to be embraced by him, and received into his presence. This was their hope and expectation, as appears by the confusion they were in when shut out, and by their earnest entreaties to be admitted. But they were disappointed of their hopes, and their expectations were cut off; and no wonder, for one half of this company was wrong at their first setting out, and so they were at their journey's end. For *five* of them were *foolish*. These took not their vessels, nor had they any oil with them; and therefore their
lamps

lamps went out, when they had the greatest need of them, namely, at *midnight*. Nor did the spiritual Aaron, our great high-priest, either trim their lamps, or feed them; and therefore they of course went out; and, when out, they were left in the dark, which to them is an earnest and a prelude to everlasting darkness.

My design is to handle these two sorts of virgins separately, that you may see the one from the other. I intend to discourse on the *wise* virgins at this time, and at some future period I will treat of the *foolish*. Now for the words of my text.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
In handling this subject I will endeavour to describe,

I. The virgins.

II. Their wisdom.

III. Their lamps.

IV. Their vessels.

V. Their oil. And,

Lastly, How they fared at their journey's end.

First, I am to treat of these *virgins*.

The term virgin is given to a young unmarried woman, who has kept herself chaste and undefiled. Hence we read of virgins whom no man hath known.

Sometimes it signifies a young woman newly married, and who hath lost her husband by death: *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth*, Joel i. 18.

This name is often given to a city which hath not been forced by siege, nor taken, conquered, sacked, or rifled. Hence we read, *Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.* Isaiah xlvii. 1. So we read of the virgin the daughter of Zion, and of the virgin of Israel; and, indeed, *there are threescore queens and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number; but my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, and the choice one of her that bare her.* But the virgins in my text are so called on a religious account, because of their faithful and close attachment to the Son of God, and on account of the purity of their consciences, their lives, doctrines, and worship: they had not suffered themselves to be seduced, defiled, and corrupted, from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The virgins here mentioned, which are called wise virgins, are heavenly and spiritual virgins, as the bridegroom they go forth to meet is the heavenly and spiritual bridegroom. They are elected or chosen persons; chosen in Christ, and given to him before ever the world was made, and were secretly espoused to him from all eternity in God the Father's purpose, and in the cordial acceptance of them by Christ himself; on which account he calls himself their husband before they are openly espoused to him. *Fear not, for thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, &c.*

But

But there is an open espousal of them in time, by the power and presence of Christ attending the gospel preached, as saith the apostle; *I have espoused you to a good husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* Indeed, before Christ is known we are wedded to the law of works, until we find that the law worketh wrath in us, and ministers death to us; that it is weak through the flesh, and therefore can give us no help; a killing letter, and can give us no life. This makes us die to all hope in it, and it appears a dead letter to us; then, when faith comes, we get from under it, and are no more bound to its rigorous exactions, being redeemed from it by the crucifixion of Christ, and delivered from it by the grace of Christ. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.* Rom. vii. 4. Hence it is that a poor soul, mourning under his sins, and condemned by the law, is compared to a desolate widow, until Christ betroths the soul to himself: *Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more; for thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name.* Isaiah liv. 4. Here we forget the shame of our youth, guilt being purged away; and, as for Satan, law, and conscience, they can no longer

reproach us with being without Christ and having no hope in the world, for we are to remember the reproach of our widowhood no more; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. The name of *widow* is rubbed off, and the name of *virgin* is given. And, when this reproach and shame are purged away, and all our reproachers are silenced, then it is that the union takes place between the heavenly bridegroom and the poor distressed soul; love is shed abroad in the heart, and nothing but love is discovered in the altogether lovely Jesus. This love knits the marriage-knot, cures all our love sicknesses, and its cruel attendant raging jealousy. Love casts out fear and torment, joins the soul to Christ, and it is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God. Such, faith Paul, are *presented as a chaste virgin to Christ*.

This mystical marriage was pointed out under the former dispensation. The high priest, who was a type of Christ in his priestly office, was strictly forbidden to take any person to wife but a virgin: *And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take; but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.* Levit. xxi. 13, 14. In allusion to this, all the followers of the High Priest of our profession are called *virgins*.

But again. This virgin is one who strictly adheres to her marriage covenant, by which *she is betrothed to the Lord for ever, even betrothed to him in righteousness,*

righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, and in mercies: yea, I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. Hosea ii. 19, 20.

The covenant of grace, in which she was given to Christ, and in which Christ was given to her, is highly esteemed by her: she knows that, in the ancient settlements, in the divine counsels of old, *a certain man made a marriage for his son*; and, in the day of her espousals, she sets her seal to the truth of this: *it is the whore that forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God, whose ways take hold on hell, going down to the chambers of death*; but this virgin abides by the doctrines of Christ, and hath both the Father and the Son: she hath God to her father, and Christ to her husband.

Moreover, this virgin is embraced, in all her bridal attire, as a bride prepared for her husband. God imputes the wedding garment of his dear Son to her; her faith apprehends it, and puts it on; God the Father draws her to her beloved, and he receives her as the Father's gift, saying, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called *Evah*, the mother of all living saints, and *Hephzibah*, for my delight is in her. *This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* Loving kindness crowns her head, imputed righteousness enrobes her person, meekness and quietude adorn her soul, modesty and bashfulness appear in her countenance; and she often blushes at a sight and sense of her own unworthiness. An
illuminated

illuminated understanding and faith are her eyes; the bond of the covenant and its promises the chain of her neck; her shoes are *peace*, and *truth* her girdle: and so sure as a bridegroom decketh himself with his ornaments, so sure is this bride thus adorned with her jewels.

Furthermore, her faith and affection to her royal consort are sorely tried. Many of Satan's procurers try hard to degrade and debase her spouse, in order to lessen him in her esteem, and to rival him in her affections; many old pimps sit at the seats of their doors, and lie in wait at every corner, in order to ensnare and beguile her, saying, *Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But these know not the thoughts of the Lord.* Micah iv. 11. Neither Satan, the arch seducer, nor any of his forestallers; neither Jezebel the witch, nor Babylon the whore; could ever finally alienate her affections from her covenant Head, or so damp her love as to get her to relinquish her hold of him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger, to follow other lovers, to admire their bed when she saw it, or to discover herself to another, so as to expose herself to be judged, as a woman that breaketh wedlock is judged; nay, so far from it, that she will not suffer lawful love to the creature to grow into inordinate affection without checking it, disapproving and disallowing of it, so as even to cry to her husband about it: *Draw me, and we will run after thee.* If thou dost not draw me, I shall be drawn away from thee. She is not like that
easy,

easy, quiet whore in the city, who was to be stoned to death for her sinful compliance, and for not crying out, *Deut. xxii. 24.* In short, at the worst of times this virgin can say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* And, if mislead and detained a captive, yet, as soon as she gets loose, she will say, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now.* I come next to treat of

II. The *wisdom* of these virgins. The other virgins are called *fools*; but these are said to be *wise*. The first appearance of their wisdom is in learning to bring distant things near. They dare not cause the seat of violence to approach while they put far away the evil day. The day of judgment and they are daily conversing together, however terrible the meditation, or shocking the appearance. This is one part of the wisdom that God calls for: *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would but consider their latter end. The wise man foresees the evil, and hideth himself; but the wicked pass on, and are punished.* To foresee the evil day is to bring it near, to cite ourselves at the bar both of God's law and our own conscience, in order to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged, and that we may accept the punishment of our iniquity, and not be condemned with the world; and to search and see which way a poor sinner may fly from the wrath to come; and, when Christ, *the hiding-place from the storm*, is discovered, to betake ourselves, with all our grievances and troubles, and
with

with all our confessions and petitions, to him, in order to embrace him as the only refuge that God hath set before us: and, when faith gives us access to the love of his heart, we are hid; and under his shadow we shall dwell in safety till every calamity be overpast. That which prompts us to this is the alarm of God in our conscience, which awakens a whole army of terrors and fears about us; and this *fear is the beginning of wisdom*, and operates upon us as it did upon Noah when God apprised him of the future deluge: *He was moved with fear, and prepared the ark.* We are moved with the same fear, and betake ourselves to Jesus, for fear of being drowned in destruction and perdition.

This wisdom farther discovers itself by making the heart honest and humble, to tremble at, and to come to, the light of divine revelation. The heart that is endowed with this wisdom, and implanted with this fear, moves in concert with the lively oracles of God. If God threatens, the sinner trembles; if God forbids, he tries to forbear; if he contends, he stands mute; if he smites him, he falls under it; if he pleads against him, his unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God; if he says, Come, let us reason together, he keeps his distance: if he sets his sins in order before him, he knows they are not all there; if he fills him with wrath and rebuke, he expects worse; if he writes bitter things against him, he aggravates every circumstance in the hand-writing; if he is inclined to
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be propitious, he refuses to be comforted; if mercy melts him, he coyly refuses it; and, if God appears pacified toward him, he abhors himself in his own sight for his iniquity. Not so the fool: he hates the light; Prophecy smoothes things, prophecy deceits, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us, saith he; heal our wounds slightly; cry peace, peace. *These have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is there in them?* Jer. viii. 9.

Their highest wisdom consists in this, they know their Saviour, and their interest in him; they know whom they have believed, and that their faith in him hath purified their heart; the blood of sprinkling speaks in them, and the Spirit bears his witness to their sonship; and this is *to be made wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ*.

Such a soul knows that there is no other way into the holy of holies, but that which Christ hath consecrated through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and, as he received him, so he endeavours to walk in him; and every thing that has a tendency to stagger, stumble, or impede him in his way; to fetter him, clog him, damp his zeal, or check his diligence; he endeavours to avoid. *The fool believeth every word, but the wise man looks well to his way.*

If any thing stumbles his judgment, he prays for instruction; if he cannot make straight paths for his feet, he waits for God's counsel; if the standard be lifted up, he mends his pace; if his heart be enlarged,

enlarged, he runs; if the sun shines, he lays by every weight, and the sin that so easily besets him, the worst of which is unbelief. *The wisdom of the wise is to understand his way.*

Such a soul knows that God's way is not his way; that it is not obvious to the light of nature; that, unless God shines upon it, it cannot be discerned, although so many eminent men have been employed in casting it up: hence he tries it by the word, seeks direction of the best guides, feels for God's arm, leans on his beloved, and observes the dictates of the Holy Spirit; and, when he has the approbation of Christ and conscience, *wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace: and this way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.*

The wisdom of this poor soul lies in his knowing what is acceptable to God. Without forgiveness of sin he knows there can be no admission to heaven; *for the unclean shall not enter there: without holiness (by the Spirit) no man shall see the Lord;* without an imputed righteousness no acceptance; *the unrighteous shall not enter the kingdom:* and without truth in the heart all religion is vain; for truth must be settled in heaven; but he cannot come there *who loveth and maketh a lie.* These things he seeks, after these he follows, and these best gifts he covets, as things that accompany salvation; and all these things he has in Christ, and he enjoys them by virtue of union with him: *And this is the wise man,*

man, who builds his house, digs deep, and founds it upon a rock; that, when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon the house, it stands fast, being founded upon a rock.

Once more, the wise man knows the connexion that Christ sustains, and in what covenant relation he stands to him; that he is made of God unto him wisdom as well as righteousness; and to know him and the power of his resurrection is the quintessence of all wisdom; and all wisdom short of this he deems folly. *If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for all human wisdom is foolishness with God, as it is said, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, vain in their imagination, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* Which leads me,

III. To describe their *lamps*. This parable seems to have an allusion to a Jewish wedding, which came on after the espousals. The night being arrived for the young couple to come together, the bridegroom and his friends set off with their lights, from his father's house, to meet the bride; at which time she and her female attendants set off from her father's house to meet him, in order to be conducted to the house which he had provided for her. And so it is here. Christ leaves heaven, his father's house, and comes with all the saints and angels attending him; when the bride, and her companions, shall be brought to him, *with joy and rejoicing shall they be brought, and shall enter into the king's palace;*

palace; namely, the new earth first, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and shall spend a thousand years with him; at which time he shall present her to himself a glorious church, having neither spot nor wrinkle; and afterwards he will present her unto his Father, at the delivering up of the kingdom, and place her at his own right hand. On the right hand stood the queen in gold of Ophir.

The first account we have in scripture of a lamp is in Gen. xv. 17. Abraham was commanded of God to take *an heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.* The beasts he divides in twain, but not the birds. *And when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, which was followed with an horror of great darkness. And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, that passed between those pieces. In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed I will give this land.* It is thought, by many, that the sufferings of Israel in Egypt were represented by this furnace, and their great deliverance by the lamp. But I believe the slain beasts prefigured Christ; Abraham's darkness and horror, the bondage and wrath of the law; the smoking furnace, the sufferings of Christ under man's crimes and God's wrath; the lamp, the glorious salvation that should follow his crucifixion; for it is his death that ratifies and confirms the covenant of grace, and secures the heavenly country to all Abraham's

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mystical feed. And for this construction of the words we have the authority of the prophet Isaiah, who quotes this burning lamp, and applies it to the salvation of Christ. *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteous thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.* Isa. lxii. 1.

The brightness, brilliancy, lustre, and glory, of this righteousness, spring from the glory of the great personage that wrought it out; it is *the righteousness of God*. Glory, and the rays of infinite divinity, attend it to every soul to whom it is imputed; and the time will come *when the righteous shall shine forth (in it) as the sun, in the glory of their Father's kingdom, for ever and ever.*

The salvation here mentioned is called *a lamp that burneth*. Salvation from guilt and filth, from fear and bondage, wrath, death, hell, and damnation, comes into the soul like a flaming torch: the sun of righteousness arises upon us with healing in his beams, and conveys such divine heat and everlasting light as shall never be quenched nor extinguished: and it is attended with such a flame of heavenly love as melts the soul, kindles in the breast, and makes the heart burn within us. This makes a man a burning and a shining light; yea, it makes a minister a flame of fire. In short, salvation by grace is a lamp that never goes out; for *we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

Some tell us that this lamp is a lamp of profession; but this is saying nothing, as we have no scripture that calls a profession by that name. The lamp, as above described, is the lamp which these wise virgins took; had they taken any other, they had been just as foolish as the rest. Which leads me,

IV. To describe their *vessels*. By their vessels I understand their *hearts*; for religion without the heart is like the white of an egg without salt; it can be no more than bodily exercise, which profiteth nothing. If we draw near to God with our mouth, and honour him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him, in vain we worship him; and to set off for heaven and dream of getting there, while our hearts are set on the things of time and sense, is going without a heart; for *where a man's heart is there is his treasure*. God promises to take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and to give us an heart of flesh: *Yea, a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will give them an heart to know me, for I will pardon them whom I reserve; and I will circumcise their hearts to love me, that they may live.*

Where there is no heart in religion, there is no faith, for *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*; and where there is no heart there is no Christ, for he dwells in the heart by faith; and without the heart there can be no grace, for grace is the hidden man of the heart.

Furthermore.

Furthermore. God looks with compassion on them, and only them, that tremble at his word; nor will he dwell with any but those that are of a broken and a contrite heart, *to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones.* A whole-hearted sinner needs not the physician; nor does the commission of Christ reach him, for he was sent *to bind up the broken-hearted.*

These wise virgins knew the deceitfulness, the bitterness, the treachery, and the plague of their own hearts; and they knew the change that God had made therein. Hence we may see that every thing which these wise virgins were, and all that they had, came down from the Father of lights. They were all of them by nature sinners, dead in trespasses and sins; but God chastened them, and taught them out of his law, and then he drew them to Christ, that they might find rest in him *till the pit be digged up for the wicked*; and Christ received them as his Father's gift: this entitled them to the name of *virgins.*

God revealed his Son in them the hope of glory, and they had *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*: this made them *wise virgins.*

He gave them *the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins*, which was attended with a feeling sense of the dying love of Christ, that, having much forgiven, they might love much: this was their *lamp*, and this made them *wise virgins with their lamps.*

God circumcised their hearts to love him, and wrought faith in their hearts to believe in him for life and salvation: this raised their affections above, and sent them out to meet the bridegroom; for where should they be but where their hearts and treasures were? They never set out in hope and expectation of meeting the bridegroom till they were furnished with those things that would procure their reception, and make them meet for it. I come now,

V. To treat of their oil. The Jewish high priests, the prophet Elisha, and the kings of Israel, were all anointed with oil to their offices by the command of God; and HE that is now our prophet, priest, and king, was anointed also, and that with the Holy Ghost without measure. The holy penman, in his account of the anointing of Christ, is very particular, as you read, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Psalm iv. 5, 6, 7. It is plain that the marriage of Christ is set forth in this psalm. *All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.* Here is Christ, and a company in the ivory palaces making him glad; and next we have the church and her company mentioned; *Kings daughters were among thy honourable women; upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.* In the

the next place he orders her to quit her father's house, and come forth to meet him: *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.* He then tells her what a kind reception she shall meet with by so doing: *so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.* Next, mention is made of more bridemaids, even from among the Gentiles; and some of the great ones of the earth, too, shall entreat the queen's favour: *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.* Now he applauds her: *The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold.* And next comes her glorious admission into the royal palace: *She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work; and with her are brought the pure attendants that follow her, even the same persons mentioned in my text: The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee, with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace.* Psalm xlv. Out of this psalm, and the book of Proverbs, the Lord took this parable of the foolish and wise virgins. And it is beautiful to see the gradation that appears in this psalm; for, first, here is the chosen spouse set before Christ, at the sight of whom he is much taken. 2. He is anointed to be a priest, to redeem her by his sacrifice, and as a prophet to instruct her; and hence he calls upon her to hearken to him. 3. He is anointed to his kingly

office, and tells her that the king greatly desires her beauty, and then gives her the title of queen, suitable to his rank, and promises to bring her to his palace, and there to place her on his right hand. And these things were enforced with the most endearing affection, to induce her to quit her own family and father's house, and go forth to meet her bridegroom.

There were two things in the Saviour's view which rejoiced his heart when the oil of gladness was upon him; the one was the day of his espousals: *Go forth, O daughter of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

The other thing was, the glory that was to be put upon his human nature at his ascension to heaven, and the fulness of joy he was to have there. Hence you hear him speaking: *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.* This was the joy that was set before him, for the which he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Now let us look at the oil of these wise virgins, and see what it is. Solomon makes this flaming oil of the wise to be joy. He tells us that the light of

of a just man burns with joy, when the light of the wicked is extinguished: *The light of the righteous rejoiceth, when the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*

And the prophet Isaiah calls it *the oil of joy*; for, prophesying of Christ, and what he should do when he came, he tells us that he shall *comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.* Isaiah lxi. 3. Hence it appears that the spiritual and heavenly joy, with which the Holy Spirit fills the new-born soul, is this oil which the wise virgins took in their vessels. This appears still more evident, because it is opposed to mourning, and is promised to the mourners in Zion: and nothing can be more desired by poor souls mourning under sin than this joy of the Lord; yea, even the foolish virgins craved it when their lamps went out; *Give us of your oil.* Which verifies the saying of the wise man, *There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise.* Prov. xxi. 20. And this proverb is fulfilled in my text, for *the wise had oil in their vessels.*

We know that oil is a furious thing to burn; and sure I am that nothing destroys grief, sorrow, misery, and mourning, more effectually than the joy of the Lord in the heart. This oil makes a man's face

to shine, however fallen, sickly, sad, dejected, or gloomy, it might appear before. Prosperity and joy, adversity and pensive consideration, are opposed to each other: *In the day of prosperity be joyful, in the day of adversity consider; God hath set the one against the other.* When our spiritual might abates, and our joys flag, we may prophesy as David did, *My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn; I shall be anointed with fresh oil.*

Moreover, oil is of a very predominant nature; put it into what you will, unless it mixes, it will be uppermost; and so the greatest felicity of heaven is set forth by it: *In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* According to Paul, joy is the second fruit of the Holy Spirit of God: *Love, joy, peace.* Anointed with this oil, shall the sons of God return to their father's house: *They shall come with songs, and everlasting joy upon their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* The Lord fill us with all joy and peace in believing.

Once more. What can fill the bridegroom's heart so much as joy, when he is going to take the desire of his eyes home to himself? Or what can fill the bride's heart but joy, when she is going to the bosom of him who is supreme in her affections? And how doth the scriptures set this comparison of, and interweave it with the soul's espousal to Christ? *Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah,*

Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For, as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. Isaiah lxii. 4, 5.

This oil of heavenly joy is an inestimable treasure, and so it will appear to the wise whenever the midnight cry comes. When the children of this world will be in their greatest security, buying, selling, building, planting, marrying wives and giving in marriage; when all on a sudden the archangel and the trump of God will alarm them all; then, then to reflect upon the work of regeneration, and to look forward with a good hope through grace, and feel a love to his appearing; to see and know that now is an end to all sin and sinning; to all sorrow, sadness, and suffering; and to have nothing before us but eternal felicity, and the bridegroom coming to be admired in all that believe, and to receive the darling of his soul home to himself; this, this will make the oil burn brighter than ever. I now hasten to shew,

VI. How they fared at their journey's end. We are informed that *the bridegroom tarried*; he was not quite so quick in his motions as they were in their expectations; and perhaps the cause of this was, somebody had been too busy in fixing the time of his coming, as many speculators have been very forward at fixing the precise time for many events which God hath not revealed: beyond this time,
limited

limited by some and expected by others, the bridegroom tarried; *and they all slumbered and slept.* Faith was out of exercise, hope was not looking out, nor expectation on her watch-tower: patience had no troubles to exercise it, love was grown cold, diligence was worn out, grace lay dormant, and all the senses became drowsy; nothing awake but poor honest conscience, and he was not attended to. *I sleep, but my heart awaketh. It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love.* Though the spouse was asleep, her heart was not; and, however dead asleep, yet she knew the voice of her beloved, and says, *It is the voice of my beloved that knocked.* These words of the church Christ himself quotes: *Let your loins be girt about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.* Luke xii. 36.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. At midnight was this cry made. The creation of the world is called *morning*, and the angels who then sang their anthems are called *the morning stars that sang together.* Job xxxviii. 7. The prophetic age is called *noon*, Amos viii. 9. In Christ's days it was called *supper time.* Luke xiv. 16, 17. But this cry is at the close of time, and therefore called *midnight*: and there is an allusion to the midnight cry in Egypt, when the

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first-born in every house lay dead, and Israel all in perfect safety, *who kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.*

However, God will always have some watchmen on the walls of Zion to give the time of the night, as was the case here; there were some that cried the hour even at *midnight*, for at that time the cry was made: *surely God will not do any thing, but he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets.*

Before the flood, Noah was let into the secret of the deluge. Before the destruction of Sodom, Abraham first, and then Lot, was apprised of it. To the destruction that came upon Egypt Moses was privy. Jeremiah was informed of the duration of Israel's captivity in Babylon. Daniel was informed when the Messiah would come. And both Daniel and the Messiah himself gave many broad hints of Jerusalem's desolation. And so likewise of the day of judgment, some watchmen will be informed of that, lest the Lord, coming suddenly, should find his spouse sleeping.

Behold, the bridegroom cometh. This watch-word was not given to the world, for he is not a bridegroom to them; the warning was given to Zion, and to the inhabitants of that city; and they, and only they, took the warning, and were alarmed and roused up by it.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. The foolish, as well as the wise, being in communion
one

one with another, received the warning. But I shall not take notice of them at this time. The wife *trimmed their lamps*: by which it appears that their evidences were begloomed, and their spirits dull; the grace of God in their hearts, and their past experiences, much obscured; their lights very dim, and their love cold; much sin unconfessed and unrepented of, and the great day of accounts put far away. But this cry alarmed them, and awakened all their fears about them: their backslidings reproved them, their base ingratitude stared them in the face; and their carelessness and cold indifference terrified them. This led them to self-examination, and that led them to humble confession: fear moved them, and prayers were fervently put up for pardon, peace, and a revival of the work; when a fresh application of the atonement was applied, meekness and humility were granted, and they restored to the joys of his salvation, and furnished and upheld by his free spirit. They saw that their guilt was purged, and their wedding garment on; truth was about their loins, and love in their hearts; the Spirit's witness within, and a serene heaven without; faith in exercise, and hope in vigour: and, being thus ready prepared, as a bride adorned for her husband, they cry, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*

And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. This marriage is not in heaven, or in ultimate glory; for Christ

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at this time comes to raise the dead who died in faith, and to change the saints that shall at this time be found alive upon earth; and, when the one is changed, and the other raised, they enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, which at this time will be let down out of heaven from God. *They will mount up to meet the Lord in the air; when he will burn the world, and all the wicked in it, as he did Sodom and Gomorrah; and then create all things new. The elements shall melt, and the heavens pass away with a great noise; the earth, and all her works, shall be burnt up, and a new heaven and a new earth appear, agreeable to his promise, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* This will be the last jubilee, and the last sabbath; and now shall *the meek inherit the earth, and the elect long enjoy the work of their hands; for they will, in this state, outlive all the antediluvians; for they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years.* This will appear a heavenly country, and Zion a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. This will be *the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city, and the camp of the saints; and the thousand years rest that remains to the people of God, of which the sabbath was a sign; and here we shall rest from our works, as God did from his.* At this time we shall meet all the flock: this will be *the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.* And at the close of the thousand years the wicked shall be raised and judged; and, when

when banished and imprisoned, the saints will ascend to ultimate glory, the scaffold will be struck, and time will be no more ; but heaven will be the saint's final home, and God will be all in all.

Now suffer a word of counsel and advice. As the midnight cry in Egypt was emblematical of this midnight cry at the end of the world, so God's direction to Israel will serve as a guide to us. Israel was a typical people, and prefigured the whole Israel of God ; they were all the sons of God by national adoption : *Israel is my son, my first-born ; let my son go, that he may serve me* : and, as such, they represented all the sons of God, who were predestinated to the adoption of children ; which preadoption is manifested to them at their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every household of Israel was to take a lamb ; and every little congregation belonging to the household of faith, must by faith take hold of the Lamb of God ; and this lamb, our passover sacrificed for us, must be eaten ; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. This sacrifice is a sweet entertainment for a restless, disquieted soul, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, life, pardon, peace, reconciliation with God, and eternal salvation ; and will nourish faith and hope : it will satisfy a barren, empty, perishing mind ; and quiet, compose, and becalm an accusing conscience, and gratify it to the highest degree. This lamb was to be roasted with fire : and the faith of a believer sees and feels the
curse,

curse, the burning ire and smoking jealousy, of a sin-avenging God revealed in a fiery law, poured forth upon the Lamb of God, who suffered in the room and stead of his people; so that he is redeemed from the wrath to come, and delivered from going down to the pit, by the life of Christ, laid down a ransom for many. The blood of the lamb was to be put upon the two side-posts, and upon the upper door-post of the houses. Christ does condescend to visit his elect while we dwell in the houses of these our earthly tabernacles, and demands entrance by the everlasting doors of our hearts; and when the King of Glory comes in, he not only puts a little sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock, but with his blessed atonement he sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience; which saving benefit being applied, procures his admittance ever after, and makes his company so desirable. This sacrifice was to be eaten with unleavened bread, which Paul says is *sincerity and truth*. Sincerity is opposed to hypocrisy, and truth to falsehood: hypocrisy, malice, and wickedness, is called old leaven. *And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. The truth* (as it is in Christ), *received in the love of it, and with it the love of the truth*, or the love that God promises in the word of truth to reveal in us, is, according to Paul, the saint's girdle; *having your loins girt about with truth*. The loins of the mind being girded up keeps from a loose and scandalous profession, and
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from embracing the damnable lies and heresies that abound in our day. To walk humbly with Christ, and to enjoy peace in him, and in our own conscience, is *having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. The staff must be in our hand. Christ, in his office of a shepherd, has his *staff*; and, as king of Zion, he hath his *rod*, or sceptre; of which David speaks. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*, for I am a sheep of his pasture; *the Lord is my king, working salvation in the midst of the earth*; and he will magnify this staff by his tender care of me, and shew himself worthy of a *right sceptre* by destroying my enemies and defending me. *I will fear no evil, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*. This staff is the gospel, which is the power of God to salvation, and by which mighty power we are kept through faith. But the lamb must be eaten with bitter herbs; *with bitter herbs shall they eat it*. These are not palatable, but profitable; they are not intended to fill the belly, but to purge and strengthen the stomach. When bitter trials cease we get lifeless; and when lifeless Satan gets little injury, and God gets but little glory. The only remedy against slumbering and sleeping is diligence and watchfulness; for all the time we are diligent our souls gather fatness, and God is glorified, which is what Satan cannot bear. It is when the soul is pressing forward to Jesus that Satan buffets him; and it is when he would do good that evil is present with him. Let his diligence abate, and Satan is undisturbed; let

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him

him cease to do good, and the old man will not so strongly annoy him: this brings on slumbering and sleeping, the offence of the cross is ceased.

A worse slaughter than that of Egypt will be made at the midnight cry, I mean among those who will be found in their first-born state. Let us, therefore, keep the passover and the sprinkling of blood.

Again: Israel was to abide in their houses; and the saint should abide in the house of God, for there the midnight cry will first be made, and there the warning be first given. Once more: At this passover Israel was to begin to reckon time; it was to be the beginning of months unto them; and at the last midnight cry suffering time, sinning time, the devil's time, and the time of sinners plaguing the saints, will be over; and a whole thousand years complete will take place, and run out, before Satan and his adherents come forth to judgment. They shall all be in prison during this term, while Christ will reign before all the antediluvian and postdiluvian saints, and that in a glorious manner; for so it is written: *The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall*

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be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. Isaiah xxiv. 20, 21, 22, 23. God grant we may be found among this number. Amen.

The Foolish Virgins described.

SERMON II.

MATTHEW XXV. 3.

THEY THAT WERE FOOLISH TOOK THEIR LAMPS,
AND TOOK NO OIL WITH THEM.

SOME time ago I gave you a discourse upon the *wise* virgins, and now I will endeavour to give you a description of the *foolish* ones, that you may see the difference between them, and judge for yourselves which class you belong to.

Such scriptural accounts of hypocrites as these which describe their setting out in a profession, the name *virgin* being given to them, their taking their *lamps* as well as the *wise*, the shew that they made in their profession, their constant company with the righteous, the length to which they run, and their continuance in their course, even till the midnight cry proclaimed the day of judgment at hand, and even then to awake and begin to trim their lamps,

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expecting

expecting to be admitted into the marriage chamber as well as the others; when, instead of that, they were sent away as workers of iniquity. Such accounts as these, I say, are very trying to young Christians. I see more and more the need of deep and heart-searching preaching in our days, for we swarm with professors: but what are they? They know not what they hear in the general, nor in what they believe. The *fan*, therefore, must come, and will come, to purge the floor.

About seven years ago I was much exercised in soul, for many months. Scenes of calamities and troubles were continually before me, and destruction in various forms. After having carried this heavy burden for six or seven months, it wore off a little; *God speaketh once, yea twice; but man perceiveth it not.*

At length the present war broke out, about which I have had many night visions. These things led me to search the scriptures, and to seek the face of our heavenly Father, by prayer and supplication, for a little instruction in these things. It appears to me, that one of the heaviest times that ever fell upon Christendom, the most universal and the sharpest, is now before us. It may not last long; and it may lead on to the last conflict that ever mount Zion will have with the children of men.

This is mentioned in Daniel: *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time*

of

of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. Dan. xii. 1. Whatever sufferings fell upon the Jews under Antiochus, or whatever they suffered in their last desolations by the Romans, it is my opinion that this text hath never had its full accomplishment yet; and for this reason, because it is mentioned by John in his Revelations, which book was (I believe) written after Jerusalem's destruction. The words are these: *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* Rev. iii. 10. Now this cannot have reference to the Jews, which were at this time dispersed: and, besides, these things were sent to the seven churches in Asia. If the time of trouble mentioned in Daniel had been fully accomplished by Antiochus, it would not have been repeated here as something yet to come; and, if it had been fulfilled in Jerusalem's desolation, it would not have been revealed as a prophecy to the Gentile churches in Asia. Nor do I believe that this storm ever fell, with all its weight, upon any one of those seven churches to which these epistles were sent; but that it is something yet to come.

However, there is some consolation to the children of God in both these passages; for *at that time Michael shall stand up.* He will not be a careless or an

insensible spectator: he will stand up, as he did at the martyrdom of Stephen, and exert his power in the behalf of those who suffer for his sake; for, if he be a present, yea, *a very present help in time of trouble*, much more so in this time of trouble, which is to be such as never hath been since the world began. And he is *the great prince which standeth for the children of Daniel's people*; by which is meant, not the Jews, but the people of God's covenant, as Daniel was; and his sort of people, real believers, and brethren in the faith, being the spiritual children of Abraham according to the promise. *Michael stands up for these*; to support them, to give strength according to the day; to regulate the heat of the furnace; to stay the rough wind in the day of the east wind; to let the rage of his enemies out, and to restrain the remainder of their wrath; to give them presence of mind in times of trial; to furnish them with wisdom how to act; and to make a way for their escape; for it is said, that *at that time thy people shall be delivered, even every one that shall be found written in the book*. Dan. xii. 1. God's elect shall be delivered, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, slain from the foundation of the world. And with this account in Daniel John agrees in his Revelation about the deliverance of God's elect: *And, because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, &c.* The word of Christ's patience is the gospel; keeping of it is believing in it, holding
it

it fast, and abiding by it, in the face of all opposition, and endeavours of the wicked to wrest it out of our hands.

1. It seems by this as if those who walk in craftiness, and handle the word of God deceitfully, and those that are hypocrites in their profession, and mere formalists, will suffer a little, if not the most, in this perilous hour. And no wonder, for such persons are often the most secure; and this storm will fall very suddenly, for Christ, who threatens it, immediately adds, *Behold, I come quickly* (Rev. iii. 11); that is, I come quickly to inflict this punishment.

2. The righteous are, in some measure, in God's secrets, but the wicked are not. God will give his people some notice of it, as he did to his disciples of Jerusalem's destruction, that they might flee from it, while the rest fled to Jerusalem for safety, and perished with the city. Moreover, this time of the most perilous and dreadful struggle is called an hour, a very short time, perhaps not a month; in which the Lord may hide his own in this day of his fierce anger: *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them.* Those that keep the word of his patience are called the *few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

That which is to lead on, and pave the way, to this trying hour, is scattering the power of the righteous: *And, when he shall have accomplished to*

scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. Dan. xii. 7. By this power is meant, not the power of God, for who can scatter that? By this power I understand the strength and power of human laws, which keep the nations in order, and the wicked in awe, and which tolerate and protect those that fear God in their worship unmolested; and, when these fences are broken down, and this power scattered, we know what must be expected.

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he lifted up his right hand, and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. Dan. xii. 7. The man clothed in linen is Christ in his priestly habit. The duration of Zion's suffering under Antichrist is to be a time, times, and half a time; which, in the prophetic style, is three years and a half, or one thousand two hundred and sixty years. And it appears that when these years are run out, or nearly so, the power of the holy people shall be scattered, and this perilous hour shall come on; and this, with the slaughter of the witnesses, will be the end of Zion's sufferings by the hand of the wicked, and the last triumph of her enemies; and of this we are assured by the promise and oath of Christ himself. Now we must go to John.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Measure the temple of God, and

the altar, and them that worship therein. Here John, or those ministers whom he personated, is ordered to take the word of God, and to describe a real church, the altar, and the use of it, and the real spiritual worshippers of God. By the temple I understand the church at large; by the altar Christ, and the use that must be made of him by all believers; and by the worshippers to describe the true from the false. An allusion is here made to the temple at Jerusalem, on the outside of which was a cloistered walk, called *the court of the Gentiles*; next to this, and in the temple, was the large court which held the national church of the Jews; next to this was the sanctuary, where was the altar of burnt-offering, and where the priests entered to perform their service; and next to this the holiest of all. Now, under the gospel, all real believers are called *a royal priesthood*; yea, they are made *kings and priests unto God*. The temple was a type of the whole visible professing church; in which there are some real worshippers, who are priests in the sanctuary; some national worshippers, who worship with their bodies only, and are graceless and undevout worshippers; and without this court is the court of the Gentiles, the papists. The outward court is not to be measured, because the Gentiles, who are in the cloistered walk, are to have it. *But the court which is without the temple leave out [cast out], and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles.* Rev. ix. 2. This outward court I take to mean protestants who are
unregenerate

unregenerate men, let them be of what sect, name, or party, they may, whether churchmen or dissenters: these are given to the Gentiles, they are ranked among the papists, and will be gained over to them. And, as to the spiritual worshippers, the real citizens of mount Zion, they shall trample upon them: *And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.* Here Daniel's three years and a half are called forty and two months, which I believe mean the same length of time. This is the whole time of Zion's suffering under the man of sin; but when they began, or when they will end, I know not; the vision will speak in time. During this term of years the gospel shall be preached notwithstanding all the opposition made against it; for so it follows: *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth.* Rev. xi. 3.

And, when they shall have finished their testimony; when Daniel's time, times, and an half; when the forty and two months; when the one thousand two hundred and sixty years are expired; then their testimony shall be finished; and then the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. Rev. xi. 7. This will be Daniel's time of trouble; the prophets' last mourning days; the last furnace that men will heat for Zion, and Antichrist's last triumphant festival. This killing of them doth not mean so much the murdering of them as the silencing or slaying

slaying of them in their ministry, or as ministers; so that the word of life shall not be held forth by them as witnesses of God; for so it follows: *And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.* Rev. xi. 8. This shews that, wherever these witnesses are, there they will be slain or silenced; and, as the place where they lay dead is called the street of the great city, it is plain that the countries where the witnesses lay must be gained over to the Roman church, or else they cannot, with any propriety, be called *the streets of that great city.*

The time that they are to lie silenced, or dead as witnesses, is three years and a half. *And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.* By these two prophets I understand ministers and churches (read Rev. xi. 4); for the churches are the ground and pillar of what the prophets preached, or the living epistles of what the prophets wrote. It seems farther evident that this mystical slaughter of the witnesses will be universal, wherever they are, because different people, kindreds, tongues, and nations, shall see them; and shall make merry, send gifts, and rejoice, on this occasion.

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This, as before said, will be Zion's last trouble, and the hypocrite's last triumph; for so it follows: *And, after three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them.* The Spirit of God inspires them afresh for their great work, and they ascend into a state of heavenly-mindedness, and appear again as a cloud of witnesses for God: and now Babylon falls; and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rev. xi. 15.

Now here are two different times of suffering mentioned. The one the slaughter of the witnesses, which will last three years and a half; the other, *the hour of temptation, which is to come upon all the world to try them.* Now I take these two scenes of suffering to be distinct things, and to come on at two distinct periods, for the following reasons; namely, from the hour of temptation those are to be kept who keep the word of Christ's patience; and the world is to be tried; yea, all that dwell upon earth shall be tried: whereas in the slaughter of the witnesses the people of God are to suffer, and the world are to rejoice, make merry, and send gifts one to another. And there is also a difference in the duration of these two suffering seasons; the one is called *an hour*, the other *three years and a half*. But what
this

this trying hour is, or when the heaviest of it will come on, is unknown, though the thing itself hath been in a measure revealed to some already, and will be revealed more plainly to them who have kept the word of his patience; but to the whole crowd of professors at large I believe it will be hid, and will fall upon them when they are most secure. *If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* Rev. iii. 3.

It is not easy to tell in what part of scripture the late revolution in France, and the dreadful war that succeeds it, stands. No commentator, that I have seen, has described it: some, in our day, have thought that this was the earthquake and the downfall of the tenth part of the city mentioned Rev. xi. 13; but that cannot be (though it may be an earnest of it), for the witnesses must be slain, and lie three years and a half, and rise, and ascend, ere that earthquake comes on; for so it is written: *And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them; and the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, &c.* Rev. xi. 12, 13.

We have more need to fear a certain army in the bowels of our own country than all the combined forces on the frontiers: the damnable heresies of every sort that are revived and spread in the open face of the Sun of Righteousness; the hourly insults that are offered to the dignity and majesty of his highest nature, and all the perfections of it; the daily elopements

elopements of women from their husbands, and the unclean spirit of whoredom that so universally reigns and rules among the higher class of people, who ought to set an example to the lower ranks; the numberless swarms of professors, who have no more than a form of godliness, and who hate the power thereof; the many upstarts and presumptuous pretenders which have lately appeared in public, and the deluded multitudes which have been led astray by them; the presumption of some who have pretended to take the Jews to the land of Canaan; the daring pretensions of other novices to convert them; the universal clamours of the call and commission of others to convert the heathen nations, without any account given to the Christian world of their own conversion, much less of their call or commission from God to such a work. Another thing which I fear is, the threatened stroke of heaven upon the oppressor. The last hard frost gave the coal merchant his opportunity of grinding the face of the poor to the uttermost; which will never be forgotten in the days of this generation. The year following *the whole staff of life* was confined in the hands of the farmer, the monopolist, the mealman, and the miller, who exhibited such unparalleled hardness of heart, covetousness, and cruel oppression, as is not to be found in the annals of time. *But will not God visit for these things, and shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Yea, he will; for *because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

disobedience. I have run on here till I have almost lost myself and my text too. I was to describe the foolish virgins; and I believe there never were greater numbers of this sort in a profession than in the present day; and surely never was there less of the pure gospel preached, nor less faithful dealing than at this time; for it appears to me that the whole work of the greatest part of our present preachers is to collect, varnish, and ornament, just such virgins as those in my text, and nothing else; and, in handling these words, I will endeavour to describe them in the following manner:

- I. Treat of their *virginity*.
- II. Of their *folly*.
- III. Their *lamps*.
- IV. The *blaze* they made. And,
- Lastly, The cause of their going out.

First, I am to treat of their *virginity*. It seems that our Lord Jesus Christ is determined that no soul shall ever be a loser by him; all that follow him shall gain something; and they generally gain what they seek after: *None shall kindle a fire upon his altar, or shut his doors for nought.* Many followed him formerly for the loaves and fishes, and they were fed twice; many, in our days, follow him for nothing else but to get business, and they succeed. Some follow him from a real sense of their need of his mercy; and, when they have got that, they follow him in faith and affection; and these get both the
kingdom

kingdom of heaven, and all other necessities into the bargain; and many follow him only to get a religious name, and such obtain it. The antediluvian professors, who married the daughters of Cain, were called, on account of their profession, *the sons of God*. The thousands that passed over the sea of Tiberius after Jesus, were called his disciples: *Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*. Judas obtained both a title and a fiddle; the name of an apostle, and an empty gift: *He took part of this ministry with us*, says Peter. Now, as all these have gained something by trading, it can hardly be thought that the fools in my text should go altogether unrewarded. No, no. *Virgins* they are called, and that by the Son of God himself. There is certainly something glorious, heavenly, and honourable, in real godliness, or else the worst of creatures would never wish to imitate it. The devil himself sees something so beautiful in God, and in his glorious perfections, that he has always tried to imitate him, just as a monkey does a man; and has had more human worshippers and admirers than ever God had; yea, we read of *the devil and his angels*; so that he has got angelic adorers as well as human; and he has obtained the name of a god, for he is called *the god of this world*: and sometimes he tries to transform himself into the likeness of an angel of light: and, as Satan tries to mimic God, so his children try to mimic the saints. Hence the fools in my text are called virgins; and every whore in London would
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like to be called, and to be thought, the same. But God hath set such a brand of infamy on their foreheads, that nothing under heaven but evangelical repentance can ever deface it.

The name *virgin*, of right, belongs to the real spouse of Christ; and here it is given only on the account of a profession. They had nothing but the name, not the thing signified by it; by name they were *virgins*, in religion *fools*, and by practice *workers of iniquity*; and such the Judge calls them when he bids them depart from him. A professor of godliness and a worker of iniquity is as great a contradiction in terms as an undefiled whore. Spiritual virginity lies in a soul's holding itself not its own, but sacred to its only and eternal lover; barring the heart, mind, affections, and judgment, against all rivals and bold intruders; preserving all its charms, such as the strongest affections, secret recesses of the mind, most earnest desires, choicest praises, stable confidence, sweetest words, and firmest trust, for the service of the best beloved, and none else: *Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* But the virginity of this fool lies only in name, in outward shew, and in word; they kept their carcases out of the world, but not their hearts; they joined themselves to the saints, but they were never of one spirit with them; they went forth to meet the bridegroom with their feet, but never walked by faith; they learnt to talk of Jesus as the saints did, and as a parrot learns to speak man's words; and the parrot

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knows just as much what it means as these fools did of the Lord Jesus; for he tells them at last, *Depart from me, I know ye not*; and, if he did not know them, it is not likely that they should know much of him. Which leads me to consider,

II. Their *folly* or *foolishness*. These fools were not idiots; for such persons have not sense enough to act the part of an hypocrite in so complete a manner as these did, even to deceive the wise virgins themselves, until the midnight cry undeceived them. Nor can these fools mean persons of weak capacities, for the same reason: an arch hypocrite, in the general, is a cunning, subtle, sharp, keen, crafty person, as Judas, Simon Magus, Ananias, Ahithophel, &c. These virgins are called fools on a religious account, because they deceived themselves, and were deceived; and because they took so much pains to gain an empty name, which only at last entitled them to the greater condemnation, which is threatened to an hypocrite in Zion; or else their foolishness lay in their certain expectation of heaven in their own thoughts, when of all fools they were the farthest from it.

A fool in religion is one that is ignorant of the corruption of his own nature; of the enmity, rebellion, deceit, and hypocrisy, of his own heart; of his being destitute of all righteousness, holiness, wisdom, strength, and power, either to will or to act for God; he is ignorant of the sting of death that is in his heart, and of the strong man armed that keeps his
foul

soul in a false peace; and therefore he never was chased out of his refuges of lies; he is in covenant with death, and with hell at an agreement, and rests carnally secure in flesh and blood: and *he that trusts in his own heart is a fool.*

In all this fool's profession there is no self-examination, no diving into the heart and conduct, no pondering over, or reflecting upon, the long black list of crying crimes that lie behind; and in all his hearing there is no appropriation; he is charmed with the sound, as some horses are with a fiddle; and the more noise the more music. The sword of God makes no incision in him, reproof and rebuke make no impression on him; he hears the letter by the preacher's voice, and, with a feigned faith, and in carnal security, he reclines himself upon it. *Every one that beareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.* This fool never felt the burden of sin and the wrath of God sink him, and therefore never searched deep to feel for the rock to rest his burdened soul upon; it is a dead soul, resting upon that which is a favour of death unto death.

There are none more certain, or more at a point, than this fool. To attempt to convince him, counsel him, or to undeceive him, is pulling him down from his excellency; and you may just as well turn

a swine as persuade him: he sees his way clear, he knows where he is going, and where he shall end; *the way of a fool is right in his own eyes*, if it be wrong in the eyes of every body else.

Wisdom asserts that the confidence of this fool is as strong as his way is right: he is not one that is given to stagger; few fits of incredulity fall to his share; and no wonder, for his faith is never tried; he walks boldly, and well he may, for against him there is no rising up. He has neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, to cope with. Not the world, for that loves its own; not the flesh, for his confidence is in it; not the devil, for he is the author and finisher of this faith; and he is not divided against himself. If his confidence meets with any checks, it is now and then brought on by a stroke from the lips of the righteous: this sometimes touches him a little; and this he highly resents, and calls it making the righteous sad, whom God would not have made sad; such are not builders up, but destroyers of God's heritage: and he deems it the effects of a bad spirit, of narrowness, of pride, of bigotry, and contraction of soul; and, in order to keep all light and conviction out, and to fortify himself against all truth and equity, he storms till he has silenced his adversary, and contends with the more violence for his full assurance of faith; fully persuaded in his own mind that no legal bondage, fear, trial, or trouble, will ever move him; his heart is fixed; and he daringly persisteth in his presumption. *A wise man feareth,*

feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident. Prov. xiv. 16.

This fool often deceives the simple by a collection of such general terms as are peculiar to religious characters: the words truth, righteousness, faith, experience, grace, the Spirit of God, the old man, temptations, persecution, good hope, the fear of God, election, the gospel, the trial of faith, the inward man, the children of God, the promises, the covenant of grace, sanctification, justification, the saints' final perseverance, progressive work, instantaneous work, the good work of grace, the buffetings and conflicts of God's people, &c. when he knows not what he means by any one of these phrases; nor can he explain, define, or clear, one of them. But poor, simple souls, who are used to gospel language, they hear and find that these are such terms as they have been used to; and therefore swallow them down, and admire his sound speech, and his experience, only because they hear the names of these things mentioned; but, when troubled souls come to seek unto him to solve their doubts and fears, they find the voice to be Jacob's voice, but the heart and hands both belong to Esau. *Excellent speech becometh not a fool; much less do lying lips a prince.*

The whole work of this fool lies in one single branch of exercise, and that is, *the talk of the lips*. Self-denial, the daily cross, the furnace of affliction, the perpetual warfare between flesh and spirit, the

plague of the heart, the stirrings of corruption, the hiding of God's face, legal bondage, doubts and fears of miscarrying, never trouble him; he eats the lamb without the bitter herbs, and drinks his wine without mingling; his days are prosperity, not adversity; his soul knows its own joy, but not its own bitterness; his heart is in the house of feasting, not mourning; his religion lies all in his mouth, as cathedral worship does in an organ; it is all wind music: *For a dream cometh through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words.*

The fool is bomb-proof against all the artillery of a good soldier of Jesus Christ; no bow bends him, no arrow enters his reins; no weapons, however mighty, bring down his imaginations, nor any high thing in him that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; no thoughts of his heart are brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; Satan keeps full possession of his palace, and God the Saviour lets Satan hold his own: *He is joined to idols; let him alone.* The hammer of truth never smites him, the fire of God never melts him, the sword of the Spirit never pierces him, the incarnate word never searches his heart, nor tries his reins; all attempts at his conscience is beating the air, getting one's self a blot, or braying a fool in a mortar; for a presumptuous sinner thus swoln and puffed up with pride, seated in the scorner's chair, and hardened in perilous presumption, is seared with a hot iron, and past feeling. Hence the scriptures represent one
word

word in a living soul to have more effect than a flogging at a cart's tail hath with a callous hypocrite : *A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.*

The folly of this fool is further described by his inverting all truth, and acting counter to all the paths of it, and to all the pillars and grounds of it. Hence Paul tells us that the Galatians were bewitched, that they should not obey the truth, but lies; that another gospel and another spirit suited them best; and poor Paul became their enemy, and they of course hated him, for telling them the truth. These were wise men; they submitted to circumcision, that the cross of Christ might profit them nothing; they went over to the law to be justified by the works of it; and, having begun in the spirit, or with the dispensation of the gospel, they were going to perfect the same by the works of the flesh. This was a way that seemed right in their own eyes, but the end thereof is the way of death. From this the apostle tried to dissuade them; but he was their enemy, and truth was the cause of it. Those who preached another gospel, and influenced them with another spirit, were the men: those that Paul wished to be cut off for troubling them, were their only comforters. Truth was error; the gospel became a handmaid to the law; the work of the Spirit led to the perfection of the flesh; justification by faith was to lead them to the law to complete the work of righteousness; and falling from grace was to be the

completion of life; and rendering Christ unprofitable to them was the only way to gain by trading. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?*

The fool in my text is one that is very fond of displaying his own abilities, that he may appear to be as wise in the eyes of others as he is in his own conceit: and we seldom read of one fool contending with another, for this would hurt the common cause, which every fool is under some obligation or other to support. The antagonist of this fool is, in the general, some poor, simple soul or other, that loves and fears God; and if, by brow-beating, an inch of ground can be gained over one of this stamp, this is a feather in his cap. *The fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.* I shall now

Consider the *lamp* of this fool. *They took their lamps and went forth, &c.* They did not all take one and the same sort of *lamps*: the wise took the lamps that were peculiar to them, and the foolish took the lamps that were peculiar to them; as at a Jewish wedding, every one took his own lamp or torch. I proved, in my last discourse, from the prophet Isaiah, that *salvation is a lamp that burneth*; but no fool ever took this; if he did, it would never go out; for we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end. This lamp we receive from the Saviour, and it is given to the daughters

of Zion. *The Lord hath chosen Zion; this is my rest for ever. I will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.* Psalm cxxxii. 16, 17, 18.

The lamp that the foolish virgins took is the law; *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.* Prov. vi. 23. Salvation by grace is the lamp of the wise, and the law is the lamp of the fool. When God writes his law of faith on the sinner's heart by his Spirit, and puts his fear within him; when he appears to be merciful to his unrighteousness, and to remember his sin no more; this is his lamp; he takes it, and in faith and love goes forth to meet the bridegroom. And, on the other hand, the fool who has got *the works of the law* (as Paul says) *written on his heart*, he must of course go forth with this, for he has no other. The works of the law are written in his heart, and all the dreadful contents of the law are in him; the curse, the wrath, the fear, the bondage, and the torment, of the law are in him; only, being carnally secure, and dead in sin, he neither knows it nor feels it. Hence you read, *The curse of God is in the tabernacle of the wicked. He that believes not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.* Bondage, fear, and torment, are in him: love never made him free, then he must be bound; love never
cast

cast fear and torment out of him, then they must be in him.

The alarms of heaven have not roused his conscience; no army of terrors have awakened him; the strong man armed keeps possession of the palace, and his goods are in peace. He was drawn by love, but never chastened; he is reconciled to God, though he never felt his enmity; he loves the Lord, though he never knew what it was to hate him; he believes, but never felt himself shut up in unbelief: this is the new wine put into the old bottle, and the new cloth put upon the old garment. He rages and is confident in his life; and it sometimes happens that he has no bands in his death, but his strength is firm; his life and his lamp both go out together: *Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his lamp shall be put out with him.* Job xviii. 5, 6. One blessed effect of the new birth is to clear the soul of bondage, fear, wrath, and torment; and the other is to make it meet for heaven. But a man feels no more the wrath and bondage of the law than he does of his own guilt, sin, and misery, till he is alarmed, awakened, and quickened, by the Spirit of God. And how shocking must that sinner's state be whose soul is daubed over with a profession, while all these dreadful combustibles lie at the bottom undiscovered and unsuspected. This is healing the wound slightly. But the midnight cry alarms the fool, and stirs all this army of terrors up,
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and out goes his lamp, and all the blackness and darkness of Sinai succeed. I come now

To speak a little of the blaze that these fools made before their lamps went out, for their going out presupposes that there was something of a light. This light I take to be a little head knowledge, which at times greatly pleases the fool, and of which he is swoln with pride: *Knowledge puffeth up*. Hence you read of some that *rejoiced in John's light for a season*; and of others who *heard the word, and anon with joy received it*. Their passions were moved; their natural affections were stirred up and drawn forth, and with much glee it was received, and they rejoiced in it; and well they might, for they felt no wounds. The word was not a hammer to them, nor a fire, nor a sword; there was no piercing, smiting, cutting, reproving, nor rebuking; the wolf lay fast asleep, and the sheep-skin was put on. I have thought, at times, that the devil applies the word to such hypocrites on purpose to deceive them, and that it is he that fills them with their joy, in the same manner as he will sometimes throw a person into fits, and sometimes deprive others of their rationality, and yet set them to laughing ready to kill themselves, and keep them at it for an hour together; for I know some in a profession who are always joyful, all the year round, and sometimes quite filled with it, and yet have no more experience or hope than the devil himself. Such joy is not called the joy of the Lord, nor the joy of faith. nor rejoicing in the Spirit; but it

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is called *the joy of the hypocrite*: and their laughter is called *the laughter of fools*; and their light is called darkness; *Take heed lest the light which is in thee be darkness. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.* We know that the hypocrite is the devil's own child; and no wonder if the devil furnish him with this light and joy upon hearing the word; for he hears it, and anon with joy receives it, and suddenly springs up into a profession.

The carnal mind is influenced with a feigned faith; the corrupt affections put on a dissembled love; Satan, transformed into an angel of light, shines into the understanding; much knowledge of the scriptures is given to puff up, but no knowledge of the sinfulness of the human heart. Just so the devil acted with Eve: he highly applauded *the tree of knowledge*, and the wonderful effects of it, but not one word in praise of *the tree of life*: and so here Satan highly extols the scriptural knowledge of his child, but not one word of the knowledge of his own wicked heart, for this the devil was the author of; and to attempt to discover it would be exposing his own work, and acting against himself.

That the devil is the author of the whole stock of this hypocrite's professing materials may be gathered from this: they have some bowels of mercy, and mantles of love, for every rank of sinners, and for every tribe of hypocrites under heaven; but for the poor broken-hearted, honest, faithful sinner that believes on Jesus Christ, they have no affection, pity, compassion,

compassion, bowels of mercy, or mantles of love, neither for them, nor yet for their characters. Take them to your table and keep them; bed them, board them, make them your counsellors, guides, companions, and familiar friends, as David did Ahithophel; give them titles of honour, gifts; make them your purse-bearers, and stewards of the household, as Christ did Judas; and all will not do; they will still hate you in their hearts with perfect hatred, and be plotting for your life: and the reason is, the God of heaven is in the one, and the devil himself in the other; and who can bring God and mammon, Christ and Belial, light and darkness, faith and infidelity, together? The north and south poles will as soon meet together as any union ever subsist between such parties.

When the devil has influenced, varnished, polished, set forth, and equipped, such a professor as this, he persuades him that his hearing the word, his receiving it with joy, his springing up in zeal, in knowledge, in a profession, in a reformation, and in a separation from the world, and joining with God's faints; that this is conversion, it is regeneration, and the joy that he felt is the power of God, and the confidence that attended it is the work of faith wrought in the heart with power. And he furnishes the world with preachers to confirm such in their profession. To counterfeit every distinct operation of the Spirit of God is the devil's masterpiece; and to set a sinner down in a false hope, and under an
 infernal

infernal influence, is the fool's deepest cell, the next to that of utter darkness.

When the devil sends one of his ministers to counterfeit the first operation of God's Spirit, the deceiver may be discovered by the following appearance: he comes with a gloomy countenance, and commands a solemn awe; his deportment is grave, his voice hollow, his looks declarative of pensiveness and deep thought; he deals much in mortality, death, and judgment to come; his eyes stare, his face is pale, and his accents are weighty; a solemn gloom, dismal sensations, follow, and are communicated to all the audience; a cold chill runs through the blood, and every thought of the heart is brought into captivity to the house appointed for all living. This is a solemn meeting, and a solemn opportunity; and is called the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit: whereas this influence, according to scripture, used to be brought on by necromantic art, such as lodging in the tombs, consulting the dead; and was produced in king Saul by the peeping and muttering of the witch of Endor, who brought up Samuel; and may now be obtained by attending the play of Macbeth. *But should not a people seek unto their God, to the living from the dead?* Old wives' fables about the night-mare, will-o'-the-wisp, and apparitions, will bring on this influence even upon children, till they will conceive that the whole house is haunted.

The second branch of this deception Satan carries

carries on by those who come to us with all the terrors and bondage of the law, driving us to the obedience of faith with the repeated discharges of hell and damnation; terrifying and frightening us out of sin, out of self and the world, and into holiness of heart, lip, and life, by resolutions, vows, fears, and toiling in our own strength. These tell us that they have been shook over hell, and they are got out of all the storm without either the witness of God's Spirit, the voice of the blood of sprinkling, or the sweet *yea of everlasting love*. This passes for deep experience, for the real convictions of the Spirit of God; whereas it has been found in Cain, Judas, Esau, Ahab, and in every reprobate that is given up to a fearful looking for of judgment; in all the surprised hypocrites in Zion, in all the fallen angels, and in all the damned in hell. It is not an experience of the wrath and curse of God, but an experience of deliverance from it, that worketh hope.

The third branch of this mimicry is displayed by the unhumbléd, unpardoned, unsanctified, and unrenewed Antinomian, who has the word *assurance* on his tongue, evangelical scraps in his head, hardness in his spirit, filthiness in his life, and Satan in his heart. These mount the scorner's chair; arrogance comes out of their mouth, and they talk exceeding proudly; they brow-beat and banter both law and conscience, and bid defiance to both; and, like Balaam, call God their own: they urge their plea,

plea, put in their claim, and puff at meekness, righteousness, peace, charity, contrition, godly sorrow, and repentance; they become men, and put away childish things; and, having made shipwreck of all feeling, they are safe ashore, out of the reach of all fear, storm, wind, or wave, under this hardening, daring, presumptuous spirit; the alarmed, the awakened, the seeker, the watcher, the waiter, the sick, and the wounded, are often deceived; they leave their couch and quit their cells, and up into the full assurance of faith they leap, without the operation of pardoning love, or repentance unto life. But, alas! they soon find that they have all this ground to go over again. Such believers make haste, and, like Ishmael, come forth before the time of the promise. If you tell them that they sprung up too soon, that they will wither for want of root, deepness of earth, and moisture; this is making the heart of the righteous sad, whom God would not have made sad. Under the influence of this spirit Korah raised his company to confront Moses, to assert the holiness of all the people, and to invade the priest's office. Under the same influence the false apostles swayed the Corinthian church. Numbers of them, all on a sudden, were fit for orders: these were zealous of spiritual gifts; others flocked to the idols' temples; another kept his father's wife; and these desired a proof of Christ's speaking by Paul.

The fourth branch of this deception of Satan is intended to imitate brotherly love. This is carried
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on by those who *allure through the lust of the flesh and much wantonness*. This influence, according to Paul, is carried on privately, *by creeping into houses, and leading captive silly women*; by using exhortations which favour of *deceit, uncleanness, and guile*. 1 Theff. ii. 3. Milton represents this in its first operation on Adam and Eve after the fall as so intoxicating that they thought that new divinity was springing up within them. Some of Paul's wanton widows, under this influenza, *kicked against Christ, waxed wanton, and turned aside after Satan*. Eli's sons were both priests of Belial; men of this cast, who used such guile in their office as led them to sacrifice to Venus at the porch of the tabernacle. These professors are great admirers of love feasts. Peter tells us that they were spots in their feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear; that they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, had eyes full of adultery; cursed children, that could not cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls. The way to find such men out is, to look at their congregations; and, when you see two or three women to one man, you may be sure that Belial is in the pulpit; for God has fixed it as an eternal rule, and we may judge by it, that there shall be, *like people like priest*.

The fifth influenza is intended to counterfeit the melting operations of the spirit of love, which is produced by those who are skilled in empty oratory. Such feel out and play upon the corrupted passions of flesh and blood; they make their bowels yearn

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and sound like an harp. This produces a voluntary humility, natural meekness, weeping, and lifting up the hands; glee, joy, and the raptures of the way-side hearers, follow. This is called a refreshing time; every plant is watered at such seasons as these. I once heard of an old lady who went into a meeting-house accidentally to hear a sermon, and there was an orator in the pulpit; and the good old matron was wrought upon, and went after the sermon was over and offered herself to the minister as a member; informing him of the power that she had felt, and of her conversion under the discourse. He wanted to know what part of his discourse it was that had done the execution; but her heart was so big, and her tears flowed so fast, that she was obliged to give some vent to her passions before she could speak. The word, she said, she should never forget as long as she lived; and at last, with a mighty burst of noise, passion, and tears, she said the word was *Mesopotamia*; that is the name of a country. From this sort of fire the foolish virgin gets her spark; for this is strange fire: *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled: this shall you have at my hand, you shall lie down in sorrow.*

Hence it is plain that the joy of the Lord which is produced in the soul under the operations of the Holy Ghost is the oil of the wise virgin; and the joy that springs up in the heart at the stirrings and motions of natural affections is the light and blaze of this foolish one. Their zeal, fervour, gifts, and
profession,

profession, spring up from the heat of inward passions; and so the Saviour intimates: *He receives the word with joy, yet hath he not root in himself, but endures for a while, and in temptation falls away.* This the Lord calls withering; and when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered. *All the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.* Joel i. 12.

There is no mention made in my text of any *vessel* that these fools took: *They took their lamps, but took no oil with them.* I have shewn it as my opinion, that the lamp of this fool is the law; and by their having no *oil*, we may see that God doth not minister the spirit by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith; nor does grace flow in that channel; faith comes by hearing of faith, and grace is communicated by God's giving testimony to the word of his grace; and all real joy is produced by the Spirit of God; nothing of all which comes by the preaching of the law, nor by the works of the law. The reason that there is no mention made of a *vessel* is, because all this profession is carried on without the heart; they took their lamps and went forth, but their hearts stayed at home in the world: *Their heart is far from me, therefore in vain they worship me.* God requires a heart sensible of its own plague, a broken and a contrite heart; a believing heart, and a heart circumcised to love him; and without this vessel all religion is nought, and without the *oil of joy* all worship is a task. I come now,

Lastly, To shew the cause of these lamps going out, and what it was that extinguished them. Sometimes the light of these hypocrites is from God; and I believe that the light of some others is not from God, but from Satan. It is said that *the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in his way, and his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.* Hence he so often boasts and says, *Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said, and the man whose eyes are open, hath said; he hath said which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.* And what does he see? He sees his own way to be perverse before God; he sees beforehand a drawn sword, which was to shew him, had he understood it, that he should fall in his rebellion by the sword of Israel, and afterwards be cut asunder with the sword of justice, and have his portion appointed with the hypocrites and unbelievers. And this every hypocrite sees in this world, who, in strict justice, is given up to a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries; and all other hypocrites, who die without these awful visions, will have them hereafter; for we read of some who in hell lift up their eyes. But Balaam's eyes were opened in this world; and he sees the safety of Israel, the death of the righteous, and the destruction of Amalek, and perhaps his own banishment: *I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him,*

him, but not nigh. He would see him at the day of judgment, though not now; and he would in hell behold him, but not nigh; for there is a great gulf fixed between these two parties. How lofty, how pompous this poor, proud, boasting hypocrite speaks; how does this knowledge puff him up! and so it doth all others, as well as he, who never knew the plague of their own heart.

The light that Jehu had in the scriptures, which he discerned when he executed God's judgments on the house of Ahab, seems to be from the same fountain with this of Balaam. But the light of some hypocrites seems to come from another quarter; for, if Satan can transform himself into the likeness of an angel of light, there must be some sort of shining rays about him, which must be intended to deceive some of his own children, who are given up to his strong delusions. Saul saw that David would surely be king, and that the kingdom would be established in his hand, and that he should go on and prosper. But who could shew him this? The Lord was departed from him long before, and an evil spirit troubled him. This light was from Satan; and so was the light of Haman's wise men, and of Zereſh his wife, who told Haman that, if Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, he should not prevail against him, but should surely fall before him. The light that was in Judas seems to come from this transformation of Satan. *Take heed,* says the Saviour, *lest the light that is in thee be darkness:* and in this darkness are

all those who in their hearts hate the saints of God, let them have what light, knowledge, or understanding, they may: *For he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* And this was the case with Judas; he hated Christ in his heart, though he followed him in order to get into the ministry, to get the name of an apostle, and to bear the bag, and rob the common stock; he hated Christ, betrayed him, and sold him; and Christ plainly called him a devil, for the devil shined upon him, and actuated him, and at last entered into him, and took full possession of him. But the devil would not kill him when he had got him, for that would have been Satan's sin, and not Judas's; but the devil tempted him to kill himself, that the sin of suicide might be added to all the rest; and here we may see the wisdom of the serpent. Thus it appears that God opens the eyes of some hypocrites, as Balaam, Jehu, and the Egyptians in the Red Sea, when *the eye of the Lord looked through the cloud, and troubled the host of Pharaoh; and they said, Let us fly from Israel, for the Lord fighteth for Israel against the Egyptians.*

The false rays of these hypocrites may be discovered by the discerning Christian by the following observations. I have, in the general, perceived that they are noted for finding out some new mysteries, or some new discoveries, or some new interpretations, of scripture, which, as they think,
never

never were seen before. This makes them intolerably proud; and, when once Satan has deceived them in this way, their wisdom is exalted as if it was almost infinite; for, after this, all who attempt to undeceive them are fools. Hence the Spirit tells you, *They hold fast deceit; they refuse to let it go.* When the devil has got a man safe in his net, he will roll and tumble him farther and farther, till he is bound both hand and foot, so that *he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? A deceived heart hath turned him aside, and he feedeth upon ashes.* Hence the cautions that God gives his children, *Reprove not a scorner:* and again, *He that remains an heretic, after the first or second admonition, reject; knowing that such an one is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

The ways that the devil leads these hypocrites are various. Those which I have observed are these: some are led to stumble at the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Here Satan drives them, by pride, into most daring and desperate presumption, and all manner of errors, and God resists them as forcibly.

Others are continually working at the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, until they stumble, and take offence at the Rock of our strength, which they are sure to do sooner or later; for they have no light but in the head, which lifts them up; no feeling sense of their own ignorance to keep them humble; nor the Spirit of God to

guide them. Almost every arch heretic mentioned in the history of Eusebius stumbled and fell here.

Others, like Pelagius, begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh. Satan sets them to exalt themselves, and debase the grace of God. These leave the doctrine of the Trinity alone ; as the papists, Arminians, and others.

Others he deceives by stuffing their heads with high notions, and setting them up to be something when they are nothing. This draws many poor, simple souls to look up to them as wonders from the Lord of Hosts ; and then Satan tempts them to final apostasy. This stumbles and staggers many poor souls, who used to view them as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. However, God's elect must pluck out these right eyes, and cast them from them, and cut off those right feet whose apostasy offends them, and cast them from them, and enter into life halt and maimed, rather than, having such eyes and such feet, to be cast into hell fire.

This light of the foolish, which goes out, never shines into their heart. It is not that candle of the Lord which searches all the innermost parts of the belly : it shines only in the head. *But God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart (of his people), to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is searching Jerusalem as with candles. It discovers the enmity, rebellion, wickedness, and hypocrisy, of the heart, while dreadful rebukes and*
reproofs

reproofs follow. *All things which are reprov'd are made manifest by the light which doth appear; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* And this light leads the believer into an experience which no foolish virgin, nor hypocrite in Zion, ever attained to, and that is, *to love God, because God first loved him; and to love Christ, who loved him, and gave himself for him; and to love the saints for Christ's sake, and because of the grace of God which is in them: and so it is written, Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* This new commandment is given by Christ: *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you. John iii. 34. This commandment, John says, is true in him and in us.* It is true in him, because he loved us, and gave his life for us; and it is true in us, because we love him, and the brethren for his sake: and where this is, the true light is now shining, and there is none occasion of stumbling in such, for such are pass'd from death unto life. The world loves its own, but hates the saints; and real saints hate the world, and love one another.

One cause of the lamps of these foolish virgins going out at the midnight cry is, Satan at this time
laid

laid aside his transformation, the business was done, the prey was safe in the trap. Besides, at this dreadful period Satan cannot use such trifling deception as this; he must appear in all his madness, rage, and desperation, for he himself believes and trembles at God's judgments, and is as much afraid of future torment as the hypocrite himself; hence his outcry, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?*

2. This alarm made these secure hypocrites set about a work which they had never done before, and that is, self-examination; upon which they soon discovered that their *lamps were out*, and that they had *no oil with them*; which is what they never found out till now. This sudden alarm awakened them out of their security, and begun to terrify them; their false notion of being drawn all the way to heaven by love failed them, and left them doubtful; their speculative knowledge fled; the joy that sprung from the stirrings-up of natural affections withered away; blind zeal, external reformation, feigned faith, and dissembled love, were soon blasted; when all on a sudden the enmity, rebellion, deception, hypocrisy, and deceitfulness of their own hearts, began to appear; for this dross and tin had never been discovered, nor purged off in the furnace of affliction. Upon the back of this the terrors of God, the bondage and slavish fear of the law, the wrath and curse of it, began to stir up in them; for all these things are in the tabernacles of

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the wicked, as was the case here; and they are in every one else, except those where perfect love hath cast them out. Their deceitfulness in their profession, the wicked works that they allowed themselves in, stared them in the face, for such they were; and *workers of iniquity* Christ calls them. Conscience now began to lay about him, and to act his part; and at this their hope perished, and it gave up the ghost, and all their trust became a spider's web. The motions of their natural passions, under the empty oratory of the ministers of Satan, which used to pass for godly sorrow, became of no use here, for at this time their spirits appeared hardened, and as callous as a rock; and the checks and rebukes of conscience, which used to be called the workings of Satan, and the struggles of the old man, and be resisted as such, must now be attended to as a worm that never dies.

All these things were found out when they came to *trim their lamps*. Well may Solomon call their joy *the joy of the hypocrite, which is but for a moment*. They heard the word, and anon with joy received it; but they had no root in themselves; and now the word has left them, and all their joy is withered away: *Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*. These knew who had oil, though they had none themselves. This they might easily discern by the composed frame that the wise were in, by the health and cheerfulness that shewed itself in their countenances; by the life, fervour, and
power,

power, that appeared both in them and in their devotions, even in the worst of times; and they might know this from what they had heard and seen of their past experiences; and from the many suspicions which the wise had had of the state of these foolish ones in times past, and by the repeated reproofs which they had received from them. And I have seen not a little of this in my time; not a few, who have hated me and my doctrine too, have on a sick-bed craved an interest in my prayers, and wished to see me.

Give us of your oil; speak to us, try to comfort us, and pray for us, and communicate some of your joy and comfort to our hearts. But the wise knew pretty well what preachers and what doctrines used to suit them best; and therefore they say unto them, *Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* They did not go to Christ to buy without money and without price; but they went to some of their former favourite preachers, who had extolled the power of man's free will, his faithfulness to grace received, and the talents which fall to the share of all men, and the improvements of these; for none but such as these, and the pope of Rome, ever pretend to sell these things; and these foolish souls knew that these wise virgins were averse to all these tenets, and therefore they never offered to buy of them, but to beg; *Give us of your oil.* But they sent them to those that pretend to sell; Go to your old builders-up, to those
that

that used to daub you with untempered mortar; those who prophesied smooth things to you, and whom you used so much to applaud; who have got such power, such talents, such a stock of inherent grace to improve, and a power to come to Christ if they will, and to stay away if they please; to keep the whole law, and to work out a righteousness for themselves. And to these they went, in hopes they would confirm their former doctrine, and not to Christ; for *while they went to buy the bridegroom came*, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; *and afterward came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* But it was too late; the top-stone was brought forth, the door of faith, the door of hope, and mercy's door, were closed; and none were within but the regenerate, nor any without but the workers of iniquity. An open door is now before us; the gate of life still admits weary and heavy-laden sinners. Enter this, and you shall enter the other: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*, for this stands at the head of the way of life; *and they that enter here shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.*

THE END.

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